

Earth-Friendly Gardening & Landscaping



A colonial approach for your landscape

A great many people seeking landscaping inspiration tend to overlook the actual style of their home. Certainly one of the most commonly found designs in our older, post-war communities is the so-called brick colonial, often complete with ye olde garage and driveway. These modern "colonials" typically feature an indeterminate landscape of lawns and azaleas rather than anything which might be considered truly Colonial, and perhaps better suited to the home and its setting.

Of course, there is a world of design opportunity and choice contained in the simple word "colonial," ranging from Colonial Williamsburg and Mount Vernon, with formal garden areas which might be a tight squeeze in Bethesda, to the more rustic living history sites found at the National Colonial Farm in Accokeek or Claude Moore Colonial Farm in Virginia.

Chances are that most landscaping budgets will favor the latter approach, which is closer to the land and much more practical, although a simple seventeenth or eighteenth century working garden can certainly pick up an elegant element or two from gentrified living, such as a formal hedge or a tidy knot garden of aromatic herbs.

Many homeowners are inclined to consider boxwood hedges for foundation plantings and to define pathways, often in imitation of National Historic

Trust properties. However, it should be pointed out that boxwood is a considerable investment, whether of time, where small containerized stock can take a decade or two to reach an appreciable size, or of money, where a grouping of larger shrubs can cost as much as a new car or two. Besides, *Theme Gardens* author Barbara Damrosch points out that the use of boxwood dates more to nineteenth century design than the colonial period itself. Historic accuracy could actually save you thousands of dollars, enough to buy some real antiques for your parlor.

As you consider design elements for your landscape, keep in mind that earlier gardens served a useful purpose

and were not simply decorative. Your plant selections can and should reflect some of these practical considerations, prompting you to develop beds to provide tasty salad greens, culinary herbs, small fruits and berries, and so on.

The setting for your colonial garden is often dictated by the overall layout of your home. Small herb gardens can be built outside the back door to your kitchen. Larger, imaginative designs can take over your front yard, where a picket fence can enclose a somewhat formal pattern of walkways between garden plantings.

A garden for a sunny backyard might include a fence capable of excluding deer, which were as much of a problem for our colonial forebears as for



modern suburban communities abutting wooded areas. You will find that some of the historic farm gardens nearby were constructed with tall fences of rough-hewn planks and timbers. Modern pre-made stockade fences will suffice, and can become the backdrop for raspberry canes, peas, and other climbing vines.

For craft-minded gardeners, consider erecting a thigh-high wattle fence, woven from twigs and small branches or straight sections of wild grapevine. These fences have graced gardens, and kept out rabbits, for over a millennium, and will now add a natural, historic feel to a lively salad garden brimming with chives, onions, garlic, and leeks.

Pathways through your garden or between beds can be built with elegant, recovered brick, crunchy pea gravel, or even crushed oyster shells, which were popular in some of the finer manor gardens. You can also fall back on a neatly manicured turf path or, easiest and least expensive of all, a simple mulched pathway. Select materials in keeping with your garden's function. Is your garden designed as a showcase to set off your home? Or is it a working garden generating produce for your table and pantry?

The net effect of your garden may not rival the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg, but artful design will match and enhance the traditional style of your home, while creating a flavorful and inspiring link to the past.

Colonial Herb Garden Plants

Aconite (Monk's Hood)
 Angelica
 Anise
 Applemint
 Artemisia Silver Mound
 Basil (Sweet Basil)
 Bedstraw
 Bee balm (Bergamot/Oswego Tea)
 Bethony
 Borage
 Bronze Fennel
 Bugleweed
 Butterfly weed
 Calendula (Pot Marigold)
 Caraway
 Catmint (Catnip)
 Chamomile
 Chervil
 Chives/Garlic Chives
 Clary Sage
 Clove pinks
 Comfrey
 Coriander
 Costmary
 Cranesbill
 Daffodil
 Daylilies (*Hemerocallis flava*)
 Dill
 Dock
 Endive
 Egyptian onion
 Feverfew
 Flax
 Foxglove
 Garden Sorrel
 Germander
 Heliotrope
 Hyssop
 Johnny Jump-ups
 Lavender
 Lemon Balm
 Lemon Verbena
 Lovage
 Marigolds
 Marjoram (Wild, Golden, Sweet)
 Mint (various species)
 Nasturtium
 Oregano
 Parsley (Italian Flatleaf)
 Pennyroyal
 Rhubarb

Rose Campion
 Rosemary
 Rue
 Sage (various species)
 Salad Burnet
 Santolina (Gray and Green)
 Savory (Summer and Winter)
 Scented Geraniums
 Soapwort
 Southernwood
 Sweet Cicely
 Sweet Fennel
 Sweet Violets (various species)
 Sweet Woodruff
 Strawberry
 Tansy
 Tarragon (French)
 Thyme (various species)
 Woad
 Woolly Lambs Ear
 Wormwood
 Yarrow (Yellow)

Additional Pre-1800 Favorites

Edible:

Berries (Blueberry, Cranberry, Currant, Elderberry, Raspberry)
 Beans
 Beets
 Carrots
 Cress
 Corn
 Cucumber
 Dandelions
 Fruit Trees (Apple, Cherry, Pear, Plum)
 Garlic Leek
 Hops
 Jerusalem Artichoke
 Lettuce
 Onions
 Parsnips
 Peas
 Potatoes
 Pumpkin
 Radish

Ornamental:

Boxwood
 Dianthus
 Hollyhock
 Iris
 Roses (Damask, Gallica)



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